

19

(Navaka) Ānanda Sutta

The (Nines) Discourse on Ānanda | A 9.37

Theme: Dhyana is where one is percipient but knows only itself

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1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUTTA TEACHING & RELATED SUTTAS

1.1.1 Sutta summary. The (Navaka) Ānanda Sutta (A 9.37) is a short teaching given by the elder Ānanda centering on the Buddha’s discovery of “an opening in the confined” (*sambādh’okāsa*) [below]. Ānanda speaks of this “opening” in terms of the 9 progressive abodes [§§3, 5-7, 10; 1.1.3]. **Dhyana** is described as a profound meditation attainment wherein one is percipient (of the meditation state) but neither sensing nor knowing occurs, and which is naturally free of defilements [§9].

1.1.2 The “opening in the confined”

1.1.2.1 The theme of **the Sambādh’okāsa Sutta** (A 6.26) is “an opening in the confined.” Its highlight is Mahā Kaccāna’s exultation that “It is marvellous how the attainment of ‘an opening’ (*okāsa*) in the confined [crowded, *sambādha*] has been discovered by the Blessed One”¹ (A 6.26,2). In this Sutta, Mahā Kaccāna gives **streamwinning** as the opening into the path of awakening.

Of special significance is the phrase “the household life is stifling, a dusty path.”² There is a wordplay on *sambādha*, meaning “crowded, stifling, narrow, full of hindrances,” which also refers to the sexual organ, male or female.³ The Buddha’s teaching is the path to a pleasure that is much greater, yet more refined, and totally fulfilling, bringing spiritual freedom.

In A 6.26, the key ingredient for “the opening in the confined” (the way out of suffering) is **faith** (*saddhā*), which can be cultivated through any of **the 6 recollections** (*anussati*), that is, those of the 3 jewels, of moral virtue, of charity, or of the deities. These are said to be the lifelong practice (*nissaya, vihāra*) of the streamwinner.⁴

1.1.2.2 The (Navaka) Ānanda Sutta (A 9.37) records a similar exultation by the elder Ānanda who declares:

“It’s wonderful, avuso! It’s amazing, avuso, that the Blessed One, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one, who knows, who sees,
 who discovered the attainment that is **an opening in the confined** for the purification of beings,
 for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation,
 for the passing away of physical pain and mental pain,
 for the attainment of the right way, for the realization of nirvana.” [§2]

¹ Also called (**Chakka**) **Kaccāna S** (A 6.26,2/3:314-317), SD 15.6.

² *Sambādho gharavāso rajā, patho*. There is a wordplay on *sambādha*, “crowded, stifling, narrow, full of hindrances,” which also refers to the sexual organ, male (V 1:216, 2:134) or female (V 4:259; Sn 609; J 1:61, 4:260). *Rajā, patha*, “a dusty path,” here refers to “the dust of passion,” and to “the path of returning” (*āgamana, patha*), ie, rebirth (DA 1:180,17 = MA 2:179,20; UA 237,27).

³ Allusion to the male organ (V 1:216. 2:134), to the female organ (V 4:259; Sn 609; J 1:61, 4:260). See also **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (2.1).

⁴ See eg (**Chakka**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10/3:284-288), SD 15.3; SD 15.6 (1.1); also AA 3:337 f.

While in **A 6.26**, Mahā Kaccāna presents streamwinning as opening out of the confined into the space of awakening, in **A 9.37**, Ānanda presents “**final knowledge**” (*ajjā*) or more specifically, the fruit of final knowledge (*aññā, phala*), that is, arhathood, as the opening in the confined. To attain arhathood, Ānanda prescribes the practice of the 4 dhyanas and the first 3 formless attainments, that is, omitting the 4th and last formless attainment, the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. [1.1.3]

1.1.3 The 9 progressive abodes

1.1.3.1 The (Navaka) Sambādha Sutta (A 9.42) preserves a teaching similar to that of **A 9.37**. The Sutta (A 9.42) opens with the devaputta Pañcāla, caṇḍa’s famous verse [1.2.1.1]. Then, Ānanda explains “the opening” as **the 9 progressive abodes** (*nava anupubba, vihāra*), that is, the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*), the 4 formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti*) and the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha*).⁵

1.1.3.2 While **A 9.42** lists all of the formless attainments, **the (Navaka) Ānanda Sutta** (A 9.37) omits the 4th formless attainment, the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. This omission is due to the fact that the 4th formless base is *not* a dhyana for the attaining of awakening on account of its super-subtle perception: thus, it cannot be said that whether perception occurs therein or not.

A similar supersubtle plane of existence is that of the non-percipient (non-conscious) beings (*asañña, satta*). It is part of the form sphere, whose beings are made of fine radiance or pure light. This is where only meditators who have cultivated dispassion towards perception or consciousness are reborn. The Bodhisattva is never reborn there since “nothing happens there,” so to speak. Without perception, the mind is sort of “frozen” in a suspended state of animation; hence, it does not work to attain awakening.⁶

The (Navaka) Jhāna Sutta (A 9.36) explains: “... to the extent there is **attainment with perception**, to that extent there is penetration into true knowledge.”⁷ Awakening is only possible when there is perception.⁸

1.1.3.3 The 9th abode is that of the “cessation of feeling and perception,” which usually refers to arhathood.⁹

On account of the helpful details given in **A 9.42**, and the fact that it probably preserves teachings given before A 9.37, it should be studied first, and together with it.

1.1.4 The 3 kinds of happiness

The Jana, vasabha Sutta (D 18) records teachings by Brahma Sanaṅkumara to the devas of the 33 (*tāva, timsa*). One set of his teachings is a triad on “the attainment that is the **3 openings for the attaining happiness** discovered by the Blessed One” (*bhagavatā ... tayo okāsādhigamā anubuddhā sukhassādhigamāya*).

⁵ **(Navaka) Sambādha S** (A 9.42) + SD 33.2 (2) cessation.

⁶ See **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1,68) SD 25.2; SD 23.14 (3.2.6); SD 53.23 (2.1.5). For its location in the 31 planes, see App 3, SD 1.7 (Table). On penetration into direct knowledge (*aññā, paṭivedha*) cannot occur where there is no perception, see SD 41.2 (3.2).

⁷ See A 9.36, 16.2/4:426, 9 f (SD 33.8).

⁸ The omission of the 4th formless attainment and cessation in this connection is also noted in the study of **Anupada S** (M 111): SD 56.4 (3.1.2.3).

⁹ On “cessation” or *saññā, vedayita, nirodha*, see SD 33.2 (2); SD 48.7 (3.2); SD 50.7 (1.2).

(1) One dwells with **sensuality** associated with **unwholesome states** (*kāmehi saṃsaṭṭho akusalehi dhammehi*). He hears the noble teaching, wisely attending to it, he practises the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, and **lives dissociated from such unwholesome sensuality**. On account of this, he is truly happy. This is **the 1st attainment** of the opening for the attaining of happiness discovered by the Blessed One.

(2) One has **gross bodily formations, gross verbal formation, gross mental formations, which are un-stilled**.¹⁰ He hears the noble teaching, wisely attending to it, he practises the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, and his **body, speech and mind are stilled**. On account of this, he is truly happy. This is **the 2nd attainment** of the opening for the attaining of happiness discovered by the Blessed One.

(3) One has no knowledge of what is wholesome or what is unwholesome, what is blameworthy or what is praiseworthy, what is to be practised and what is to be avoided, what is lowly and what is refined. He hears the noble teaching, wisely attending to it, he practises the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, and abandoning his ignorance, **true knowledge arises in him**. On account of this, he is truly happy. This is **the 3rd attainment** of the opening for the attaining of happiness discovered by the Blessed One.¹¹

This D 18 teaching gives the broadest definition of the **“opening in the confined”** (*sambādh’okāsa*), that is, the Buddha’s teaching *as a whole*. (1) refers to **the good lay person who enjoys sensual pleasures** (*kāma, bhogī*) in a wholesome manner (in keeping with the precepts),¹² (2) is **the celibate lay practitioner**; and (3) is **the monastic renunciant** who attains the noble path.

1.2 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

1.2.1 Theme: “Opening in the confined”

1.2.1.1 In §6 of the Sutta (A 9.37), the famous phrase, “opening in the confined” (*sambādh’okāsa*) refers to **the dhyanas**. This is clear from the verses preserved in **the (Deva,putta) Pañcāla,caṇḍa Sutta** (S 2.7), where this verse is spoken by the devaputta Pañcāla,caṇḍa to the Buddha, and in **the (Navaka) Sambādhā Sutta** (A 9.42), where the elder Udāyī repeats the devaputta’s verse, and asks Ānanda to explain its meaning.¹³

*Sambādhe vata okāsam
avindi bhūri,medhaso,
yo jhānam,bujjhi¹⁴ buddho
patilīna,nisabho munī ti.*

In the midst of the confined, the opening
the sage of vast wisdom found—
the Buddha who discovered [awakened to] dhyana:
the lone lordly bull of a sage is he.¹⁵

(A 9.42/4:449,9 f) + SD 33.2 (1)

[The Buddha:]

*Sambādhe vā’pi vindantī¹⁶
(pañcāla,caṇḍā ti bhagavā)*

Even in the midst of the confined, they find it,
(O Pañcāla,caṇḍa, said the Blessed One)

¹⁰ *Idh’ekaccassa oḷārikā kaya,saṅkhārā ... oḷārikā vacī,saṅkhārā ... oḷārikā citta,saṅkhārā appaṭipassaddhā honti.* This refers to one’s clearly unwholesome karmic actions through the 3 doors of body, speech and mind, ie, the 10 unwholesome courses of karma (*akusala kamma,patha*): SD 4.13 (2.2.3).

¹¹ D 18,23/2:214 (SD 62.3).

¹² On the *kāma,bhogī* lay person, see **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73,10/1:491), SD 27.4; SD 54.9 (4.2).

¹³ S 2.7 (SD 33.1b(2.1)) = A 9.42/4:449,9 f (SD 33.2).

¹⁴ So Be WT; Ce *ghanam,budhā* (another MS: *jhānam buddhābuddho*); Ee *jhānam abuddhi*; Se *ghanam abuddhi*.

¹⁵ For *abujjhi* here, S (PTS ed) has vl *abuddhi* (with no change in meaning). S:B tr: “The one of broad wisdom has indeed found | The opening in the midst of confinement, | The Buddha who discovered jhāna | The chief bull, aloof (from the herd), the sage.” For vl, see verse [§1b]. See S:B 386 n151.

¹⁶ So Be Ce WT; Se *sambādhe’pi ca tiṭṭhanti*.

*dhammaṃ nibbāṇa, pattiyā,
ye satim paccalatthamsu¹⁷
sammā te susamāhitī ti.¹⁸*

the Dharma for the attaining of nirvana—
those who have gained mindfulness,
those who are fully well concentrated.

(Both verses: S 2.7/1:48) + SD 33.1b(2.1)

1.2.1.2 The theme of “**an opening in the confined**” (*sambādhe okāsādhigamo*) is a well-known allusion to the Buddha’s awakening as the way out of this confined and crowded suffering world, intoxicated with youth, health and life,¹⁹ but is inherently ravaged by decay, disease and death.²⁰ Renouncing this world crowded with delusive intoxications, the Buddha awakened to **the full understanding** (*sammā sambodhi*) of the universal characteristics of **impermanence, suffering (dis-ease) and non-self**, that is, the nirvana (*nibbāṇa*) that is non-decaying (*ajarā*), non-sorrowing (*asoka*) and death-free (*amata*).²¹

1.2.1.3 The Commentary defines “**the confined**” (*sambādhe*) as those of the 5 cords of sense-pleasures (*pañca, kāma, guṇa, sambādhe*, AA 4:198,8). Psychologically, this refers to the sense-based crowdedness of our unawakened mind, rigged with endless views and uncertain emotions, mired in self-inflicted suffering. The “**opening**” (*okāsa*) is morality-based mental cultivation that is able to free the mind from the limitations of the bodily senses, that is, **dhyana** (*jhāna*) with right view that brings awakening.²² [1.2.3.2]

1.2.2 Percipient but not sensing

1.2.2.1 In §3, Ānanda states that during dhyana [1.2.3.1], although our sensory system is intact, we do not have any sense-experiences as we normally do outside of dhyana. The sense-faculties—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, and their respective sense-objects—are present, meaning that physically there are sense-stimuli. For example, sounds impact the ear-drum, etc, but, since there is no ear-consciousness, no hearing is registered by the mind. This is what is meant by “**that base**” (*tañ cāyatanam*) that is not experienced during dhyana.

The mind does not process any of the physical sense-stimuli. There is also no thinking as we do outside of meditation. The mind is only fully aware of itself but in a very subtle superconscious manner. It is a single-minded awareness with neither subject nor object—only a pervasive radiance and profound joy. It’s like a radio or transmitter on a very high-frequency, and is receiving a transmission on only that wavelength. There are other wavebands present, but none of them are engaged by that frequency.

In other words, thinking and knowing as we usually know it, do not occur at all during dhyana, while the mind is fully absorbed with itself in light and joy.²³

1.2.2.2 In §4, Ānanda goes on to clarify that “while **one is actually percipient ... that one does not experience that base**, not while one is non-percipient.” The elder Udāyī understandably is curious (as

¹⁷ So Be Se WT; Ce *pacalattumsu*.

¹⁸ So Be Ce WT; Se *susamāhitā ti*.

¹⁹ On the 3 intoxications (*mada*): **Mada S** (A 3.39), SD 42.13; **Sukhumāla S** (A 3.38), SD 1.11 (3.2).

²⁰ These are 3 universal evils or bads—colloquially known as the 3 D’s—see SD 50.9 (1.1.3).

²¹ On these terms, see Johansson, *The Psychology of Nirvana*, 1969:31-33, 103; on nirvana as “death-free,” see M 26,18.4 n (SD 1.11); Norman, “Syntactical Compounds in Middle Indo-Aryan,” 1991d:3-9, *A Philological Approach to Buddhism*, 1997:13.

²² On dhyana “with right view,” see **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 36.1b (4.4.3.6, 5.2). For details on “confinement” (*sambādha*), see **(Deva,putta) Pañcāla, caṇḍa S** (S 2.7), SD 33.1b(2.1); **(Navaka) Sambādha S** (A 9.42), SD 33.2. **The verses** of these 2 Suttas are identical.

²³ On the absence of thinking and knowing during dhyana, see SD 36.1b (6.2).

we would be) and asks: “**When one does not experience that base, of what is one percipient?**” [§4.2]. This is a difficult question to answer especially to those who have not experienced dhyana. The simple answer would be: “The mind is percipient of itself, that is, of its boundless radiance and profound joy.”

Now, **the 4th dhyana** is unique since, unlike the other 3 form dhyanas, it transcends both joy and pain. **The Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2) describes it as follows:

And furthermore, ... with the abandoning of joy and pain²⁴—and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure—he attains and dwells in **the 4th dhyana**, that is neither painful nor pleasant, and with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity. He sits, pervading the body with **a pure, bright mind**,²⁵ so that there is no part of his entire body that is *not* pervaded by a pure, bright mind. (D 2,83/1:76), SD 8.10²⁶

This passage on the 4th dhyana describes how for one with “**a pure bright mind**,” a powerful radiance, pervades his whole being “so that there is no part of his entire body that is *not* pervaded by a pure, bright mind.” This pervasive radiance also gives us a sense of **boundless space**. By simply, subtly, perceiving: “Space is infinite,” we go on to attain the formless “**base of the infinity of space**” (*ākāśañāṅc’āyatana*), as explained by Ānanda. This is **the 1st formless attainment** [§5]

Our mind, in the 1st formless attainment, is totally imbued with a sense of infinite space. In due course (after we are fully familiar with this attainment), we go on to subtly shift our attention from *the space* to the mind that is *conscious* of that space. This is “**the base of the infinity of consciousness**” (*vīññāṅc’āyatana*), as described by Ānanda. This is **the 2nd formless attainment** [§6].

1.2.2.3 In due course, after mastering the 2nd formless attainment, we cease attending to that mind, so that only “nothing” remains²⁷—we have attained the 3rd formless attainment, “**the base of nothingness**” (*ākāśañāṅc’āyatana*) [§7]. Now, in due course, by giving up the perception of “nothingness,” we move on to the 4th formless attainment, that of “**neither-perception-nor-non-perception**” (*n’eva,saññā,nāsanñāyatana*). However, in practical terms, nothing is perceived here yet one is subtly percipient. Hence, Ānanda says nothing of this base.²⁸

However, in **the (Navaka) Sambādha Sutta** (A 9.42), where Ānanda again speaks of the “opening in the confined” in terms of the 9 progressive abodes, he mentions the full set of 4 form dhyanas and 4 formless dhyanas, including the “base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.” In A 9.42, Ānanda closes by mentioning the 9th abode, that of the “cessation of feeling and perception,” which usually refers to arhathood.²⁹ [1.1.3]. However, here, in **A 9.37**, he only mentions “**final knowledge**” (*aññā*), which also refers to arhathood.

²⁴ “Joy and pain,” *sukha,dukkha*, refers to the physical feelings. The next phrase—“pleasure and displeasure,” *domanassa-somanassa*—refers to mental feelings, which have been transcended earlier. Mental feelings need to be overcome first so that the mind is not distracted by itself, as it were. Then, all the other feelings (arising from physical sense-contacts) are transcended. On the significance of this, see **Sall’atthana S** (S 36.6/4:207-210), SD 5.5.

²⁵ See **Accharā Vagga** (A 1.6.1-2): “Monks, this mind is radiant (*pabhassara*), but it is defiled by defilements from outside. The ignorant ordinary person does not understand this as it really is. As such, for him there is no personal development.” (A 1:10). On reaching the 4th dhyana, the practitioner becomes directly aware of the truly and naturally pure nature of the mind. See also A:ÑB 1999 §4.

²⁶ Further, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4.

²⁷ This is “meditative language” in action: see (2.1.1.1).

²⁸ Note that the last formless dhyana is omitted, as in **Aṭṭhaka,nāgara S** (M 52,14.6) n, SD 41.2 (3); **Mahā Māluṅkyā,putta S** (M 64,15.2), SD 21.10. The basic reason is that upon emerging from the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, perception is so subtle that there is nothing to reflect on upon emerging from it. [1.1.3.2]

²⁹ A 9.42/4:449-451 (SD 33.2). On “cessation” or *saññā.vedayita,nirodha*, see SD 48.7 (3.2); SD 50.7 (1.2).

1.2.3 The future tense expressing a universal truth

1.2.3.1 §3 of the (Navaka) Ānanda Sutta (A 9.37) lists the presence of all the 5 physical sense-faculties and their respective sense-objects during dhyana. Although the dhyana is not mentioned, we can safely assume the passage refers to **the 4 form dhyanas**. We have 3 reasons for this assumption.

First, with the subsiding of all sense-attending (with the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances), the meditator's mind goes into deep concentration, which begins with the 4 form dhyanas. Second, **the formless attainments** are mentioned by Ānanda in the following section [§§4-6] in his answer to Udāyī's question. Third, **the (Navaka) Sambādhā Sutta** (A 9.42) preserves a teaching similar to that of A 9.37, and there we have listed, firstly, the 4 form dhyanas, followed by the 4 formless attainments, and lastly, the attainment of cessation.³⁰ [1.1.3]

1.2.3.2 The 1st sentence of **§3** goes: **“The eye itself is there, as well as those forms, yet one does not experience that base”** (*tad eva nāma cakkhum bhavissati, te rūpā tañ cāyatanam no paṭisaṃvedissati*). Note here that the two verbs—*bhavissati*, “will be” and *paṭisaṃvedissati*, “will experience”—are in the the future tense. If we translate this sentence *literally*—“The eye itself *will be* there [will be present], as well as those forms, yet one *will* not experience that base”—it does not sound very right.

This is a well-known Pali peculiarity where **the future tense** is used to highlight a surprising but special truth. It is a universal truth; hence, we should use the simple present tense. This is a Pali idiom found in a number of other suttas.³¹

1.2.3.3 The Commentary explains **“The eye itself ... (is) present’** (*tad eva nāma cakkhum bhavissati*): The sensitive matter of the eye is itself unimpaired; ‘**as well as those forms** (*te rūpā*): that visible-form object itself is within range. ‘**And yet one does not experience that base’** (*tañ cāyatanam no paṭisaṃvedissati*): and yet one does not know that visible-form base.” (AA 4:198,22 f).

This is vitally important information on **the nature of the mind during dhyana**. It is fully aware of the dhyanic state, fully absorbed in it. Both the sense-faculty (the eye, etc) and their respective objects (form, etc) are functional, they are not impaired in any way. However, there is *no sensing*—no “base”—as we would normally experience outside of dhyana. In other words, the normal cognitive process ceases—we stop “knowing” sense-based experiences. There is only the subtle “knowing” of the dhyanic process, depending on the level of that dhyana.³²

2 Key terms and passages

2.1 THE FREED MIND: STEADY, CONTENT, UNAGITATED [§9]

2.1.1 Meditative language

2.1.1.1 §9.1 (with its refrain, §10.1) is the most interesting and important part of the Sutta: it gives us an insight into the nature of the Pali **“meditative language”** or “spiritual grammar.” It is a long complex sentence, and there seems to be a shift in the subject in it. In its first half of the sentence (ending with “strenuous effort”), the subject is *samādhi*; but in the rest of the sentence, the bracketed “its” refers to either *samādhi* or *cittam* (the mind), but the real subject is the meditator himself. In **§10.2**, the subject

³⁰ A 9.42 (SD 33.2).

³¹ See SD 36.13 (6.1).

³² On thoughts *not* occurring in dhyana, see SD 33.1b (6.2.2).

is again “this samadhi” that “has final knowledge as its fruit.” Final knowledge, of course, refers to arhathood.

Another example of meditative language is found in the seemingly simple sentence: “after mastering the 2nd formless attainment, we cease attending to that mind, so that **only “nothing” remains**” [1.2.2.3]. Our usual or conventional understanding of “nothing” takes on a subtle new sense: here “nothing,” or technically, the *concept* of nothing becomes the object of the 3rd formless attainment.

These are cases of “**meditation language**,” where the meditative process affects different aspects of our being and seems to transcend the rules of conventional language. Conversely, if we translate such passages “grammatically”—with, as it were, a single “unified subject,” in the conventional way, we will miss the nuances of the subtle aspects of the meditative process. [2.1.1.2; 2.1.2.1; 2.1.3]

2.1.1.2 In the second half of §9.1, it is said that the meditator, “**on account of being freed, one is steady; on account of being steady, one is content; on account of being content, one is unagitated**” (*vimuttattā ṭhito, ṭhitattā santusito, santusittā no paritassati*). The “one” here, of course, also refers to the mind or the meditator that is free of hindrances: he/it is “**steady**” (*ṭhita*), that is, defilement-free and remains calm in radiance and joy.

Since the mind is undistracted by any defilement or sense-stimulus, it stays “**content**” (*santusita*), that is, it does not need to react in any way. Such a steady and content mind is “**unagitated**” (*no paritassati*), since nothing troubles it in the slightest. It is as still as a calm stretch of water or the surface of a clear mirror. “The mind” here is a synecdoche (a short form) for the meditator, that aspect of him that is transformed by his meditation.

The Samyutta phrase in the box below is stock and recurs in the following Suttas [2.1.2], and also parallels the (Navaka) Ānanda Sutta passages (§§9.1+10.1):

(Khandha) Anicca Sutta 1	(S 22.45/3:45,13-14)	SD 93.22
(Khandha) Anicca Sutta 2	(S 22.46/3:46,4-5)	SD 93.23
Upāya Sutta	(S 22.53/3:54,1-2)	SD 29.4
(Viññāṇa) Bija Sutta	(S 22.54/3:55,34-35)	SD 8.3(9)
Udāna Sutta	(S 22.55,29/3:58,23-24)	SD 17.16

2.1.2 Comparison of passages

<p>(1) (Navaka) Ānanda Sutta (A 9.37,9+10)</p> <p><i>Vimuttattā ṭhito, ṭhitattā santusito, santusittā no paritassati.</i></p> <p><i>Ayaṃ bhagini samādhi aññā, phalo vutto bhagavatā’ti.</i></p> <p>On account of being freed, <i>one</i> is steady; on account of being steady, <i>one</i> is content; on account of being content, <i>one</i> is unagitated.</p> <p>The Blessed One said, sister, that this samadhi has final knowledge as its fruit.</p>	<p>(2) Samyutta passages: S 22.45, 46, 53-55 [2.1.1]</p> <p><i>Vimuttattā ṭhitaṃ, ṭhitattā santusitaṃ, santusittā na paritassati;</i> <i>aparitassaṃ paccattañ ñeva parinibbayaṭi.</i> <i>“Khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahma, cariyam, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparaṃ itthattāyāti pajānātīti.</i></p> <p>On account of being freed, <i>it</i> is steady. On account of being steady, <i>it</i> is content. On account of being content, <i>it</i> is unagitated. On account of being unagitated, he himself attains nirvana.</p> <p>He understands, “Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. Done what needs to be done. There is no more of this state of being.”</p>
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2.1.2.1 Here, we will examine 2 sets of similar passages, one from **A 9.37**,9+10 and the other a stock passage from **the 5 Saṃyutta suttas** listed [2.1.1]. Here are the parallel passages [Table].

While in (1) the participles are in the masculine singular—the subject is the meditator, *so bhikkhu*—in (2) they are in the neuter singular—the subject is the samadhi, *taṃ samādhim*, or the mind, *taṃ cittam*. In either case, the syntax is uniform: in (1), there is *no* ambiguity in the subject (it is masculine singular throughout). In both cases, there is no shift in the subject (say between *cittam* and the meditator); they are different in each passage.

2.1.2.2 The syntax in either case—(1) A 9.37 or (2) the Saṃyutta passages—is characteristic and clear in the Pali idiom. While in the former, the meditator is said to be liberated; in the latter, his mind is said to be liberated. In the latter, we have a case of **a synecdoche**, a part representing the whole. After all, it makes no sense to say that “the body” is liberated, but the mind is clearly always that which is known, tamed and liberated.

2.1.3 The arhat’s review knowledge pericopes

2.1.3.1 We will now compare 3 closely related passages on **the arhat’s review knowledge** (*pacca,-vekkhaṇa,ñāṇa*) for a better understanding on the Pali “spiritual grammar” or the grammar of awakening [2.1.1]:

(1) **The vimutta arhathood pericope** (an arhat’s review knowledge), is found in, for example, **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), thus:

(Through right understanding of the 4 truths and <u>the 3 influxes</u> , ³³ the mind is freed from them:)	
With <u>freedom</u> , there is the knowledge, ‘Free! [It is freed!]’	<i>Vimuttasmim vimuttam iti ñāṇam hoti</i>
He understands, ‘Birth is ended,	<i>khīṇā jāti</i>
the holy life has been lived,	<i>vusitam brahmacariyam</i>
done is that which needs to be done.	<i>kataṃ karaṇīyam</i>
There is nothing further beyond this.’	<i>nāparam itthattāyā’ti pajānāti</i>
	(D 2,97.10-12/1:84,10-12), SD 8.10

Here, the main subject of the passage is clearly the meditator, the arhat, as evident from the main verb, *pajānāti*, “he understands.” However, in the 1st line, “there is the knowledge, ‘Free! [It is freed!]’” *vimuttam iti ñāṇam hoti*, may refer either to the mind or the meditator. It is the person’s mind that is freed from hindrances and defilements. Hence, the person, too, is free from suffering, from new karma and rebirth. He is awakened from ignorance, and has won nirvana.

2.1.3.2 In this 2nd passage, the awakening freedom arises from fully understanding **non-self**:

(2) **This nibbidā arahathood pericope** (an arhat’s review knowledge) is from **the Sotāpatti Ānanda Sutta** (S 22.83).³⁴

(Through seeing the true nature of non-self , he is revulsed with <u>the 5 aggregates</u> :)	
Through revulsion,	he becomes dispassionate. <i>Nibbindam virajjati</i>
Through dispassion,	he is free. <i>Virāgā vimuccati</i>
Freed,	there arises the knowledge: “Free!” ³⁵ <i>Vimuttasmim vimuttam iti ñāṇam hoti</i>

³³ The 3 influxes (*āsava*) are those of sensual desire (*kām’āsava*), existence (*bhav’āsava*), and ignorance (*avijjā-sava*). See SD 30.3 (1.3.2).

³⁴ S 22.83 (SD 52.4).

He understands:	(<i>pajānāti</i>)
“Destroyed is birth.	<i>Khiṇā jāti</i>
The holy life has been lived.	<i>vusitaṃ brahma, cariyaṃ</i>
What needs to be done has been done.	<i>kataṃ karaṇiyaṃ</i>
There is no more of this state of being.”	<i>nāparaṃ itthattāyā’ti pajānāti</i>
	(S 22.83,10 f/3:105), SD 52.4

This passage is straightforward. As in passage (1), its main verb is *pajānāti*, the action of the subject, the meditator is an arhat, in whom arises the knowledge, “(The mind is) free!”

2.1.3.3 This 3rd sample of the arhat’s review knowledge shows his awakening through being freed from **the 3 influxes** (of sensual desire, of existence, of ignorance):

(3) In **this *vimuccittha* arahathood pericope**, the subject is clearly stated as “the mind” (*citta*) in the first 3 lines, as found in this passage from **the Bhaya Bherava Sutta** (M 4):³⁶

... the mind was freed (from the 3 influxes) ³⁷	<i>cittaṃ vimuccittha</i> ³⁸
When the mind is free ,	<i>vimuttasmim</i>
there is the knowledge in the freedom: ‘Free!’	<i>vimuttam iti ñāṇaṃ ahoṣi</i>
I directly knew:	(<i>abbhaññāsīm</i>)
‘Destroyed is birth.	<i>khīṇā jāti</i>
The holy life has been lived.	<i>vusitaṃ brahma, cariyaṃ</i>
What needs to be done has been done.	<i>kataṃ karaṇiyaṃ</i>
There is (for me) no more of arising in any state of being.’	<i>nāparaṃ itthattāyāti abbhaññāsīm</i>
	(M 4,32/1:23,23-25), SD 44.3

Although the main subject is stated as “the mind” in the 1st line, the exultation, “Free!” refers *both* to the mind as well as the meditator, as we have noted [2.1.3.1]. The rest of the passage is straightforward, spoken in the 1st person, that is, the meditator, an arhat, or more specifically, here, it is the Buddha.

2.1.4 Selfless language

2.1.4.1 English grammar, as in the grammar of most west European languages, is based on the notion of “fixed selves,” that is, the 3 persons, that is, the 1st person “I,” the 2nd person “you” and the 3rd “he/she,” the 2 numbers (singular and plural), and their various grammatical forms. **Pali**, too, has similar conventions, as far as conventional language goes. However, in terms of *a teaching that is spoken and heard* (Pali was originally **an oral tradition**), Pali refers to the mind, mental states and spiritual being in a manner more versatile than English.

Pali, as is well known, is a specialized medium, sometimes called a *Kunstsprache*, an “artificial language,”³⁹ for preserving and expressing the historical Buddha’s teachings. As a rule, its syntax is reflective

³⁵ *Vimuttismim vimuttam iti ñāṇaṃ hoti*, or “When free, there is the knowledge, it (the mind) is free.” Note that the self is not addressed here. On “Free!” see SD 50.1 (3.1.2.2).

³⁶ For nn on this passage, see **Bhaya Bherava S** (M 4,32), SD 44.3.

³⁷ Those of sensual desire (*kām’āsava*), existence (*bhav’āsava*), and ignorance (*avijjāsava*): see M 4,32 (SD 44.3) ad loc.

³⁸ This is more often in the present tense: “When the mind is freed” (*cittaṃ vimuccati*) (eg D 1:84; M 1:38; S 3:45; A 1:165); less often in the past tense, *cittaṃ vimuccittha*, mostly in Majjhima (eg M 1:23,22), and apparently, never in Dīgha and Saṃyutta. Comy only glosses on the present tense version.

³⁹ On *Kunstsprache*, see SD 49.8b (9.1.1.2); SD 3.2 (1.3); SD 53.5 (4.3.2.3).

of the key early Buddhist teaching on **non-self** (*anattā*). There is ultimately *neither* “person” *nor* “mind,” only the freedom. In other words, this is *dhamma* language that speaks of spiritual, transcendental, even ultimate, states or being, as contrasted with the more worldly and restricted “conventional” language.

2.1.4.2 In all these cases [2.1.2; 2.1.3], the anomaly is *not* a syntactic “ambiguity” but a Pali idiom, that is, a **polysemy**, where a word, phrase or passage has more than one sense, and where all these senses may apply at the same time. This may be said to be a “syntactic strategy” where a supralinguistic state or being is described in conventional language.

To bring out the full spiritual import of the passage, certain grammatical conventions may seem to be ignored so the phrase or sentence, despite its anomaly, still makes sense in English, in conveying the intended sense or most of it. We may say that such a language straddles between prose and poetry. The words themselves are likely to make no sense to one who has not tasted the state or the being that they allegedly record. Only with some taste of that inner freedom can we understand the language, and with that understanding, present it in a manner that benefits others.

2.2 THE FRUIT’S THE SAMADHI OR THE SAMADHI’S FRUIT?

2.2.1 *Kim phalo*

2.2.1.1 §9.2 of the Sutta has this question: ***Ayam bhante ānanda samādhī kim phalo vutto bhagavatā***. The phrase *kim phalo* in this question is characteristically polysemous. It translates contextually in either of 2 ways:

“Bhante Ānanda, of what did the Blessed One say that this samadhi is the fruit?” or

“Bhante Ānanda, what did the Blessed One say that this samadhi has as its fruit?”

There is no good reason to say that this passage is ambiguous.⁴⁰ In fact, its polysemy allows *both* senses of the phrase ***kim phalo***, the meaning of which the questioner is unsure herself. Furthermore, the fact that *kim phalo* is polysemous only reflects the dual functions of samadhi in the 3 trainings.⁴¹

When our meditation is morally rooted and properly done, it brings some level of wisdom (“knowing how”) to focus better and improve the samadhi, which progressively reaches a level of the wisdom of “knowing what,” that is liberating insight. Hence, *kim phalo* means “which fruit” of these two functions apply, or whether there is another fruit?

2.2.1.2 The Commentary, however, gives only the former interpretation (AA 4:200,3-7), a scholastic one [2.2.1.1]. In the Pali suttas, however, the reverse is, as a rule, the case: it is the samadhi that *gives* the freedom of mind and freedom by wisdom. In **the *Mettā Saha,gata Sutta*** (S 46.54), for example, the question of “the goal” (*kim,gatikā kim,paramā kim,phalā kim,pariyosanā*) is asked of each of the 4 divine abodes.⁴²

Further, in **the *Anuggahita Sutta*** (A 5.25) it is said: “Bhikkhus, when the mind is helped by 5 factors, it has freedom of mind as its fruit ... freedom that is wisdom as its fruit” (*pañcahi bhikkhave aṅgehi anuggahitā sammā,diṭṭhi ca ceto,vimutti,phalā hoti ... paññā,vimutti,phalā ca hoti*).⁴³ The meaning here is not

⁴⁰ Unless we suppose that it is a transmission error, which is unlikely. Or, that the editors made an error, which is even more unlikely, especially for it to have remained undetected to this day! Or, it is our own doubt that has arisen from being ignorant of the Pali idiom of polysemy: SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2; 2.2); SD 54.3b (2.1.1.4).

⁴¹ The 3 trainings in moral virtue, samadhi and wisdom: **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88), SD 24.10c; ***Sīla samādhī paññā***, SD 21.6; SD 1.11 (5).

⁴² S 46.54/5:118,22-120,19 (SD 10.11).

⁴³ A 5.25/3:20,27-29, (SD 41.11).

that right view *is the fruit* of freedom of mind and freedom by wisdom, but rather that the 2 freedoms are the fruits of right view.

Further, in **the Paṃsu,dhovaka Sutta** (A 3.100a), a *samādhi* described in exactly the same way is shown to be the supporting condition for the 6 higher knowledges, the last of which is the “the influx-free freedom of mind, freedom by wisdom.”⁴⁴ By analogy, then, it follows that this *samādhi* is not the fruit of final knowledge, but one that *brings* final knowledge. The path may be the goal—only when the path ceases to lead us on.

2.2.2 The fruit of final knowledge

2.2.2.1 The (Navaka) Ānanda Sutta closes with this last but one line: ***ayaṃ bhaginī samādhi añña,-phalo vutto bhagavatā*** [S10.2]. The compound ***añña,phalo*** may be taken either as a *tatpurusha* (dependent compound) —this samadhi is the fruit of final knowledge”—or as a *bahuvrihi* (adjectival compound)—“this samadhi has final knowledge as its fruit.” In the former, the samadhi is the same as the fruit but arises after the fruit; in the latter, the samadhi precedes the fruit, giving rise to the liberating knowledge.

The Commentary (again) gives the former sense [2.2.1]: that the samadhi is the fruit itself: “The nun asks about the samadhi that is the fruit of arhathood (*arahatta,phala,samādhi*). Final knowledge (*añña*) is arhathood. The Blessed One has spoken of this samadhi of the fruit of arhathood. (This means that) When one is percipient with the perception of the fruit of arhathood, one does not experience that base.” (AA 4:200,8-12). This is the commentarial view.

Here again, we see a late interpretation of the nature of arhathood: it is a samadhi that results from final knowledge. Such a statement seems to identify the meditation or mental state of **the arhat**, the awakened one, as the state itself: the part is declared to be the whole; the means is confounded as the end.

The truth is that the arhat’s fruit of **final knowledge** (*añña.phala*) is not only his samadhi, but, in a manner of speaking, the *whole* of his being, one that is liberated, free from new karma and rebirth. He has attained nirvana.⁴⁵

2.2.2.2 In post-Buddha sectarian Buddhisms, we see the Commentarial notion (statement) of **sama-dhi** as arising from a high spiritual state. We see such a development in a Chinese parallel to the closing passage in **SĀ 557**, where Ānanda, in reply to a nun’s question about the “signless concentration of mind,” says:

若無相心三昧，… 世尊說是智果、智功德⁴⁶

ruò wú xiàng xīn sān mèi ... shì zūn shuō shì zhì guǒ, zhì gōng dé

It seems that the signless mental concentration ... the World-honoured One said is wisdom’s fruit, wisdom’s merit. SĀ 557 (T2.146a12-29)

無相心三昧 *wú xiàng xīn sān mèi* (*animitta ceto,samādhi*), it seems (若) is the samadhi that is, in the Chinese translation, “wisdom’s fruit, wisdom’s merit” (智果, 智功德 *zhì guǒ, zhì gōng dé*), which seems to

⁴⁴ A 1:254,26-255,2, (SD 19.11).

⁴⁵ Technically, this is the nirvana of a living being, ie, nirvana with “remains,” ie, the 5 aggregates (free from clinging). On the 2 kinds of nirvana: *kilesa,nibbana + khandha,nibbana*, see SD 45.18 (2.5.2.4); *sa,upādi,sesa nibbāna,-dhatu + anupādi,sesa nibbāna,dhatu*, see SD 45.18 (2.5). On the 5 aggregates (free from clinging), see (**Upādāna Parivaṭṭa S** (S 22.56), SD 3.7 (2); **Mahā Hatthi,paḍōpama S** (M 28,27-28), SD 6.16 = SD 17.8a (13.2.2).

⁴⁶ The full sentence is 若無相心三昧，不涌、不沒，解脫已住，住已解脫，世尊說是智果、智功德。ruò wú xiàng xīn sān mèi, bù yǒng, bù mò, jiě tuō yǐ zhù, zhù yǐ jiě tuō, shì zūn shuō shì zhì guǒ, zhì gōng dé.

place the samadhi higher than wisdom, thus reversing the early sequence of the 3 trainings of moral virtue, samadhi and wisdom [2.2.1.1].

We see here already present Mahāyāna innovations where the samadhi is taken to be a development of wisdom: the means is seen as the end. The uttered word and the printed word have the power of making us feel such a statement in any manner we can imagine. Hence, it is very easy for the Mahāyāna theologians and writers to introduce Samadhis with grandiloquent names, Statements that imaginatively exceed the state.

Once this Chimaera of Samadhi had been brought to life, it prodigiously begot more fantastical Samadhis. As Buddhism matures culturally and became a market force competing for scarce clientele and resources, the **Statements** became more desirable and deified than the actual **state** the Buddha gained, lived and taught. Ironically, we can thus say that in most cases, post-Buddha innovative Buddhisms are often early Buddhism reversed.⁴⁷

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(Navaka) Ānanda Sutta

The (Nines) Discourse on Ānanda

A 9.37

1 Thus have I heard.

The Buddha's discovery

1.2 At one time, the venerable Ānanda was staying in Ghosita's park at Kosambi. There the venerable Ānanda addressed the monks: "Avuso bhikshus!" "Avuso!" the monks replied.

2 The venerable Ānanda said this:

[2] "It's wonderful, avuso! It's amazing, avuso, that the Blessed One, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one, who knows, who sees, who discovered the attainment that is **an opening in the confined** for the purification of beings,⁴⁸ for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the passing away of physical pain and mental pain, for the attainment of the right way, for the realization of nirvana.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ On the statement is not the state, see SD 26.3 (5.1.2.5); SD 44.1 (5.4).

⁴⁸ *Sambādhe okāsādhiḡamo anubuddho sattānaḡ viissudhiyā*. This discovery is, of course, that of dhyana with right view that brings awakening. See (1.2.1.2) & n below on *Tad eva nāma ...* [§3].

⁴⁹ This is the same as the well-known opening statement of **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,1/2: 290,8-11), SD 13.2; (M 10,-2/1:55,32-56,2), SD 13.3. It also occurs in A 3.74, 4.194. 6.26, and 10.95.

3 NON-EXPERIENCING THE SENSES IN THE FORM DHYANAS [1.2.2.1]

- (1) **The eye** itself is there, as well as those forms, [427] yet one does not experience that base.⁵⁰
 (2) **The ear** itself is there, as well as those sounds, yet one does not experience that base.
 (3) **The nose** itself is there, as well as those smells, yet one does not experience that base.
 (4) **The tongue** itself is there, as well as those tastes, yet one does not experience that base.
 (5) **The body** itself is there, as well as those touches, yet one does not experience that base.”

UDĀYĪ'S QUESTION [1.2.2.2]

4 [3] When this was said, the venerable **Udāyī**⁵¹ said this to the venerable Ānanda:

“Is it, avuso Ānanda, while one is actually percipient or while one is non-percipient that one does not experience that base?”

4.2 “While one is actually percipient, avuso, that one does not experience that base, not while one is non-percipient.”⁵²

“But, avuso, **when one does not experience that base, of what is one percipient?**”⁵³

NON-EXPERIENCING THE SENSES IN THE FORMLESS DHYANAS

5 (6) “Here, avuso, a monk, having fully risen above the perceptions of forms, with the passing away of perceptions of sense-impingement, with non-attention to perceptions of diversity, (perceiving) ‘Space is infinite,’ enters and dwells in **the base of the infinity of space**.

When one is thus percipient, one does not experience that base.

6 (7) Further, avuso, a monk, having fully risen above the base of the infinity of space, (perceiving) ‘Consciousness is infinite,’ enters and dwells in **the base of the infinity of consciousness**.

When one is thus percipient one does not experience that base.

7 (8) Further, avuso, having fully risen above the base of the infinity of consciousness, (perceiving) ‘There is nothing,’ enters and dwells in **the base of nothingness**.

When one is thus percipient, one does not experience that base.⁵⁴

THE SAMADHI OF FINAL KNOWLEDGE

8 Once, avuso, I was dwelling in the deer park at Añjana forest outside Sāketa.⁵⁵ Then, the nun Jaṭila, vāsikā⁵⁶ [428] approached me, saluted me, stood to one side, and said:

⁵⁰ *Tad eva nāma cakkhum bhavissati, te rūpā tañ cāyatanaṃ no paṭisaṃvedissati.* Note here that the future tense bhavissati is used in the present sense to highlight a surprising but universal truth [1.2.3].

⁵¹ Comy: The elder Kāl’udāyī (AA 4:199,2). He is foremost of monks who inspire families in faith (A 1.225/1:25). For details, see SD 24.8 (1.1.2 (2)). (**Navaka**) **Sambādha S** (A 9.42) records Udāyī mentioning the devaputta Pañcāla, caṇḍa’s verse, asking Ānanda to explain it, which he does. In fact, A 9.42 (considering its context) prob records teachings before A 9.37, and should be studied before it. [1.1.3].

⁵² *Saññī-m-eva kho āvuso tad āyatanaṃ no paṭisaṃvedeti, no asaññī.*

⁵³ On Ānanda’s answer, see (1.2.2.2). On the omission of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, see (1.1.3.2).

⁵⁴ Both Be and Ce end with *iti* here, indicating an end-quote, which suggests that the speaker of the next paragraph is Udāyī. Clearly, Ānanda is still speaking. *Iti*, then, is wr in Be and Ce. Ee and Se do not have *iti*. On the omission of the 4th formless attainment: [1.1.3.2].

⁵⁵ A city in Kosala some 72 km (45 mi) south of Sāvattthī. See DPPN sv.

⁵⁶ Be so; Ce *jaṭila, bhāgiyā*; Ee *jaṭila, gāhiyā*; Se *jaṭila, bhāgikā*. Comy says that she was a resident of Jaṭila city (*jaṭila, nagara, vāsini*, AA 4:199,14; Ee *jaṭila, gaha*-). This name only occurs here. The *jaṭila*, matted-hair ascetics, lived in remote dwellings. It was unlikely they would live in a city.

9 ‘Bhante Ānanda, **the samadhi that neither leans forward nor bends back**,⁵⁷ and is neither curbed nor checked by suppressing (the defilements) with strenuous effort:⁵⁸ on account of (its) being freed, one is steady; on account of being steady, one is content; on account of being content, one is unagitated.⁵⁹

9.2 Bhante Ānanda, what did the Blessed One say this samadhi has as its fruit?⁶⁰ [§10.1]

(9) “When she asked me this, I replied:

10 ‘Sister, the samadhi that *neither leans forward nor bends back, and is neither curbed nor checked by suppressing (the defilements) with strenuous effort*: on account of (its) being freed, one is steady; on account of being steady, one is content; on account of being content, one is unagitated. [§9.1]

10.2 The Blessed One said, sister, that this samadhi has final knowledge as its fruit.⁶¹

When one is thus percipient, too, avuso, one does not experience that base.”

— evaṃ —

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⁵⁷ *Yāyaṃ bhante ānanda samādhī na cābhinato na cāpanato*. Comy: “Neither leans forward by way of lust nor bends back by way of hatred” (*rāga, vasena na abhinato, dosa, vasena na apanato*, AA 4:199,15 f). Cf **Upāli S** (M 56,29(7d)/1:386,22*), SD 27.1; **Sakalika S 1** (S 1.38/1:28,31 f), SD 61.4; Pm 1:165,14 f = 167,6+8.

⁵⁸ *Na ca sa, saṅkhāra, niggayha, vārita, vato*; Be Se so; Ce -*varita, vate*; Be -*vārita, gato*. See **(Pañcaka) Samādhī S** (A 5.27), SD 33.13(3.3); **Paṃsu, dhovaka S** (A 3.101a), SD 19.11. Here Comy notes: “It is **steady** not because one has forcefully and vigorously curbed and checked by suppressing the defilements, but because it has arisen when the defilements are cut off.” (AA 4:199,17-19)

⁵⁹ *Vimuttattā ṭhito, ṭhitattā santusito, santusitattā no paritassati*. There is a shift in the subject in this complex sentence. In its first half (ending with “strenuous effort”), the subject is the *samādhī*; but in the rest of the sentence, “its” refers to *samādhī* or *cittaṃ* (the mind), and the subject is the meditator. This is a case of the “grammar of meditation,” where the meditative process affects different aspects of our being: see (2.1).

⁶⁰ *Ayaṃ bhante ānanda samādhī kiṃ phalo vutto bhagavatā*. On this question’s polysemy, see (2.2).

⁶¹ *Ayaṃ bhaginī samādhī añña, phalo vutto bhagavatā*. On añña, phalo, see (2.2.2).